

Citizen Testimony

Opposing HB 88

Jan. 12th 2008

Dear Members of the Committee:

I poll watched all day on Election Day at the Missoula County Courthouse. On that day, more than 1,200 people participated in same day registration/voting. Many of these voters had moved during the year or had registered to vote and had been improperly processed by the system. Many of these voters were young people who were voting for the first time, and were unfamiliar with the system.

I feel that the same day registration/voting provision is an important step toward making the political process accessible for all voters, and to no longer allow this process, would deny voting rights to some of our citizens who are traditionally not familiar or comfortable with the political process. This is an excellent example of how institutionalized discrimination works.

I feel that the traditional registration system is more favorable to middle class mature people who move less frequently, are more comfortable with the bureaucratic structure, and who are less likely to do things at the last minute. This is why it is so important to provide a choice of structures in the political process. It makes the process accessible to a wider variety of ages, cultures and learning styles.

I hope that you will support the continuance of same-day registration, and work toward a structure that makes the political process more inclusive.

Sincerely, Rachel Lopez (406)241-2825
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Missoula, Montana 59808

Members of the Committee,

In my experience working as an elections judge in 2008, I had between 6-12 people come to the polling place with the belief that they were registered to vote at their current address. In all of these cases their registration did not match up with what I had on my list, nor the database at the court house.

Fortunately I was able to direct these individuals to the courthouse for same day registration, and they were able to cast their vote.

Jason Wiener
Missoula, Mt

Members of the Committee,

This bill, HB88, is detrimental to our democratic process. Same day registration allows people the chance to exercise their rights as citizens of our great nation. To cancel this process, it would be denying citizens the right to vote.

In my work as an election judge and polling place manager, I have seen first hand how this process has benefited people. Many times, people have been under the impression that they have been registered and come to the polls to vote, but their registration was not processed. There are many reasons for this, their registration card was incomplete, or illegible, or their card was not received to be entered into the system. Not all is lost however. These citizens are able to still register and cast their votes at the courthouse. I have seen this happen at least times at my polling place alone.

There must be confusion about the process of same day registration in order for a bill like this to be introduced. Same day registration is for those who wish to exercise their civic duty. In the process of same day registration, these people, who for what ever reason were not registered, are able to have their registration checked and, if eligible, cast their ballots. This is a service to our citizens.

With the passage of HB88, those citizens, and the thousands of others across the state who used same day registration, would be denied the right to cast their vote that day. For the sake of protecting our democracy, please vote no on HB88.

Bradley Seaman
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Members of the Committee

On Election Day 2008, I took my lunch hour from work to vote. When I got to my local polling place, I was told that I hadn't been registered, even though I had registered over 6 weeks before, and was told that I had to go down to the courthouse to do same day registration. I only had an hour and so didn't have time but was glad that I would have even had the opportunity to vote regardless of whether or not my paperwork had been processed yet or not.

Melissa Johnson
Missoula, MT

Members of the Committee

I need to express my deep concerns at the possible repeal of same-day voter registration. I used it in the 2006 election, not because I was lazy, because I didn't know I needed to register, but because I was sent the wrong ballot, and didn't want to commit election fraud by voting in the wrong legislative district.

I first registered to vote, at age 18, in Missoula in 2002, and I kept my voter registration active. Spring 2006, I filled out a card to get my absentee ballot. Later, that summer, I moved to another house, across town in Missoula. Naturally, I re-registered to vote. That fall, however, I received my ballot in the mail, and it had the wrong legislative race; it had my old district's race. I went to the Missoula County Courthouse to exchange it for a correct one. They wrongfully said they couldn't do that. I was upset. It took a long time, and a lot of work for me to get my correct ballot. I placed many calls into the Secretary of State's office, and used help from third party groups that wanted to help me get my correct ballot.

Finally, the afternoon before Election Day, the Secretary of State told me I could go to the courthouse, have them "scour" my old ballot, and have them re-register me at my current address.

I needed same-day voter registration. Please don't make the mistake of getting rid of this process. There are several cases where individuals might need Election Day registration. If it hadn't of been available I would not have been able to vote through no fault of my own because of processing errors.

Kimberly Pappas
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Missoula Montana